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U.S. Skiing Employment: East and West

Abstract

[Excerpt] The skiing facilities industry is limited to establishments that only offer downhill or cross country skiing and no overnight accommodations. Larger resorts with hotels and condominiums are not included in this industry, but rather in the traveler accommodation industry. Skiers from the Eastern States may notice that Vermont is not listed in the table of the top five States for skiing employment, even though it is the most popular destination for the eastern skiing population. A majority of the places to ski in Vermont are resorts with hotels or condominium rentals, which are classified in the traveler accommodation industry.

Skiing employment in the Eastern States has remained constant for the most part, with the exception of a spike in January 2003. (See chart 1.) The East Coast experienced multiple snow storms in December 2002, which excited the ski industry's consumer base. In fact, for the rest of the winter (January-March 2003), El Niño provided fresh snow for the East at the expense of the West. For ski areas in the East, early, substantial snows are often a positive sign, as many of their skiers live in metropolitan areas that are only about 2 or 3 hours from the slopes. This easy access allows skiing to be enjoyed without a lot of advance planning. The flexibility that the eastern ski resorts offer is what has kept their employment stable (if not gradually increasing) for the past 6 years until 2007. In that winter, smaller eastern slopes, which make up this industry, struggled to even make snow because of unusually warm temperatures.

Keywords

employment, region, east, west, skiing, winter, seasonal, hospitality, recreation, accommodation, industry, jobs, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Comments

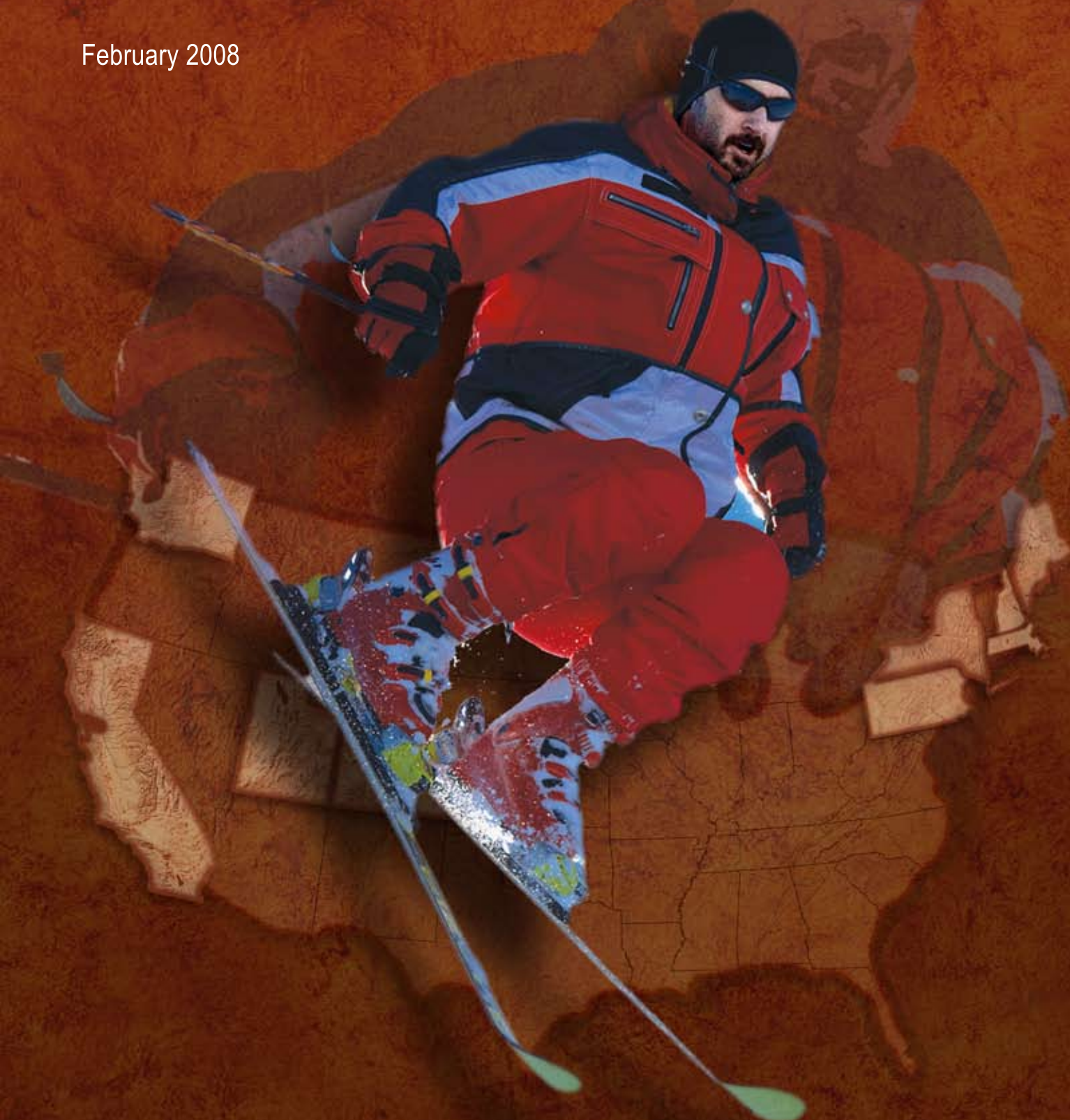
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I S S U E S I N L A B O R S T A T I S T I C S

U.S. skiing employment: East and West

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U.S. skiing employment: East and West

Ask any skier where the best runs are, and he will usually give you a highly-detailed answer, including the amount of powder involved, what the double-black and glades trails are like, and what the weather conditions are at a specific time of year. Ask a BLS economist, however, and she will also give you a highly detailed answer, but one focused more on the economic side of the industry, analyzing skiing facility employment for each region.

The skiing facilities industry is limited to establishments that only offer downhill or cross-country skiing and no overnight accommodations. Larger resorts with hotels and condominiums are not included in this industry, but rather in the traveler accommodation industry. Skiers from the Eastern States may notice that Vermont is not listed in the table of the top five States for skiing employment, even though it is the most popular destination for the eastern skiing population. A majority of the places to ski in Vermont are resorts with hotels or condominium rentals, which are classified in the traveler accommodation industry.

Skiing facilities are often placed into multiple regions by skiers (Central, Eastern, etc.). For this article, the

Mississippi River was used as the boundary between the States in the East and those in the West. January is typically the most popular time to ski and is the period covered in this analysis.

Skiing employment in the Eastern States has remained constant for the most part, with the exception of a spike in January 2003. (See chart 1.) The East Coast experienced multiple snow storms in December 2002, which excited the ski industry's consumer base. In fact, for the rest of the winter (January-March 2003), El Niño provided fresh snow for the East at the expense of the West. For ski areas in the East, early, substantial snows are often a positive sign, as many of their skiers live in metropolitan areas that are

only about 2 or 3 hours from the slopes. This easy access allows skiing to be enjoyed without a lot of advance planning. The flexibility that the eastern ski resorts offer is what has kept their employment stable (if not gradually increasing) for the past 6 years until 2007. In that winter, smaller eastern slopes, which make up this industry, struggled to even make snow because of unusually warm temperatures.

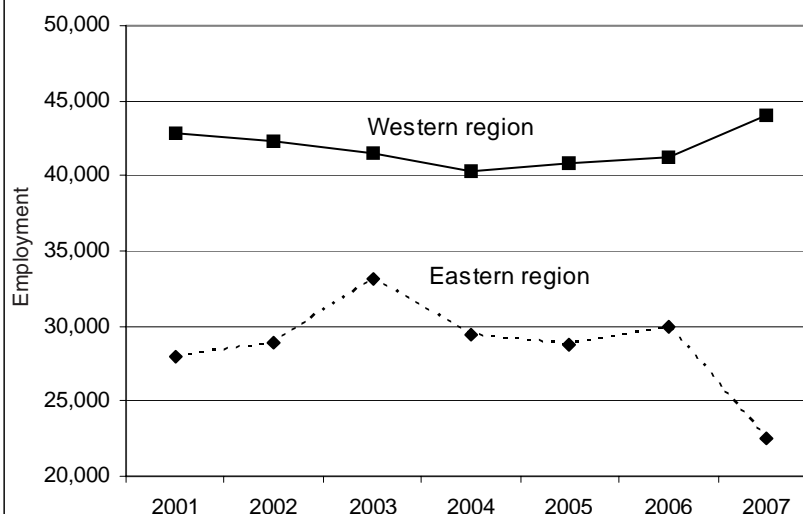
The West is a different story. It has skiing facilities with bases at double the altitude of the highest peak in the East. The snow accumulation is more reliable due to colder temperatures. These facilities, however, are not within convenient access to major metropolitan centers.

Western ski areas are more dependent on planned trips.

Weather affects the West as well as the East. Spring-like temperatures in December 2003 and January 2004 caused January employment in the West to decrease by over 1,200 jobs from the previous winter. (See table 1.) About 75 percent of this decline came from California's above-average temperatures for the month, causing snowmaking troubles for the ski areas and causing Californians to focus less on colder-climate activities. Colorado experienced a warm December in 2003, so the drop in employment between January 2003 and January

Continued on back

Chart 1. Skiing facilities, January employment



2004 was probably a response to the lower-than-usual skier visits for the month. El Nino's effect on the winter of 2006-07 brought heavy snows to the West (the East faced unusually warm temperatures that year), causing the West's ski industry to

increase once again.

These data are from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data presented here are for all private-sector workers covered by State and Federal unemployment insurance programs. For

additional information, contact Anne Lise Almira, an economist in the Division of Administrative Statistics and Labor Turnover, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics. E-mail: almira.anne@bls.gov. Telephone: (202) 691-6449.

Information in this summary

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Table 1. Employment in skiing facilities in the five States with the most skiing jobs, Eastern and Western regions, January 2001-07

Region	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Eastern region¹	27,973	28,937	33,198	29,406	28,696	29,923	22,585
Pennsylvania	5,583	5,425	6,970	6,703	6,378	6,701	3,890
New Hampshire	3,288	3,073	3,852	3,663	3,464	3,553	3,119
New York	4,583	4,394	4,650	5,054	4,750	4,857	3,059
Maine	2,896	2,750	3,084	2,157	2,377	2,207	2,393
Massachusetts	2,825	2,797	3,023	3,223	3,312	3,122	2,259
Western region²	42,840	42,302	41,537	40,312	40,782	41,216	44,431
Colorado	16,086	14,826	14,426	13,999	14,454	14,621	14,903
California	8,476	8,371	7,645	6,717	6,846	6,312	7,132
Utah	5,642	5,822	5,771	5,809	5,616	5,700	6,266
Washington	3,787	4,098	4,109	4,054	3,414	3,467	3,793
Minnesota	2,522	2,458	2,649	2,762	2,719	3,008	3,030

¹Also included in this region are Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, North Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

²Also included in this region are Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, Iowa, Alaska, and South Dakota.

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